

had a legitimate gripe about the report card. The report card should have included a section on savings. The first time around, we did not give sufficient credit for those accomplishments. As a practical matter, we gave those reports only partial credit for pinpointing waste. I say partial credit because six of those reports were given top scores in my report card, so they did get some credit—just not enough credit.

In order to fully assess Mr. Heddell's complaints, I directed my staff to reassess the scoring process for all 18 unclassified audits. In rescoring the reports, we asked ourselves key questions such as, Was the audit objective aligned with the inspector general's core mission? Did contract audits connect all the dots in the cycle of transactions? Did they match contract requirements with payments? Did the audits answer the key oversight question, which is, Did the government receive what it ordered at an agreed-upon price and schedule? Did the audit verify the exact dollar amount of alleged fraud and waste using primary source payment records? I do not have time to go into this, but the use of primary source payment records is very important if we are going to follow the money, and following the money is where we determine whether there is fraud, waste, and abuse.

Other key questions we asked were: Were the recommendations tough and appropriate? Did they recommend accountability for waste and mismanagement? Did they propose workable remedies for recovering improper payments? How quickly were the audits completed?

The answers to these questions take us right to the heart and the soul of an audit—any audit, in any department. They are a good yardstick for measuring audit quality.

This is my bottom line: Were the audits hard-hitting, down-in-the-trenches audits that produced results or were they softball audits with no redeeming value?

After completing the review, my staff upped the overall score of those 18 reports from a D-plus to a solid C.

Excellence in several reporting categories pushed the scores up as follows: All reports were highly relevant and were aligned with the core mission. They detected and reported \$4 billion in waste. Most reports offered reasonable recommendations for recovering unauthorized payments.

Poor performance in other categories pulled scores down as follows: Most reports did not verify exact dollar amounts of waste using primary source payment records. I wish to emphasize again the necessity of using primary source pay records. Follow the money. Most dollar amounts for alleged savings were taken from untested Army budget documents. Most did not offer meaningful recommendations for holding responsible officials accountable for waste and mismanagement. Of course, in government, if people are

not held responsible for what they do and accountable for what they do, then, of course, we do not see change in culture. So accountability and responsibility and holding people responsible is very important if we are going to bring changes. Then, lastly, I would say, most reports were old and stale, having taken far too long to complete.

I wish to point this out by saying, the single biggest factor that keeps dragging the scores down into the pits is timeliness or lack of it and, in most cases, the lack of it. The Audit Office continues to publish old, stale reports. Of these 18 reports we reviewed and on which I am reporting to you, they took an average of 17 months to complete. Eight took a total of 168 months to complete, and none of these numbers includes the 4 to 6 months it takes to get an audit started. So we are looking at a minimum of 2 years to complete top-quality audits.

Under my scoring system, audits completed in 6 months or less earn a grade A, those completed in 12 months earn a C, and those that take more than 15 months get an F.

These 18 reports, of course, as we can see from my comments, were over the top. So they earned a grade of F for taking so long to finish.

I have said this before, and I wish to say it again. The power of top-quality audit work is greatly diminished by stale information. Out-of-date audits have little impact—with the passage of time, records disappear, particularly financial records—because following the money is a very important part of good auditing. People retire and move on. Money cannot be recovered and no one can be held accountable, and without people being held accountable, we do not change the culture of organizations.

The new Deputy for Auditing, Mr. Blair, is part of the problem. He has not set any goals for audit completion times. I hope he will do that. Reasonable goals need to be established.

I would like to summarize. In my summarization, I would point out that I wish to talk about the \$4 billion that was potential waste and was saved. These 18 reports clearly put the spotlight on \$4 billion of potential waste. The auditors detected it. They reported it. They did exactly what they are supposed to do. That is a major accomplishment worthy of recognition and praise. So they ferreted out waste. They presumably saved the money.

But what happened to the \$4 billion? Busting \$4 billion in waste did not produce \$4 billion in savings. The savings touted by Inspector General Heddell were lost, in a sense.

Then there is a technical lingo around government: The money got reprogrammed. In plain English, that means it got put to better use but not necessarily saved. As seen through the eyes of this skeptical watchdog, all the loose change got scooped up and shoveled out the backdoor and into the jaws of the Pentagon spending machine on

some other program. That machine is known to have an insatiable appetite for money.

The disappearance of the savings is part semantics. The word "waste" is not in the audit lexicon. Sprinkling waste with perfume and calling it savings does not make it savings. Perhaps if the auditors started calling it what it is—waste—it might be easier to reach the Promised Land, but they never got there. Mr. President, 99.9 percent of the \$4 billion got spent. Only in government could we spend all the money and still claim savings.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEBT LIMIT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, later today, we will get a chance—another chance, I should say—to vote to raise the debt limit.

My understanding is, the House of Representatives has delayed the time at which they are going to vote on their plan, the so-called Boehner plan. But at some point I suspect that vote will move forward and we will end up receiving that legislation from the House of Representatives, and we will have an opportunity to act on that as well.

It will be the second bill we will vote on in the Senate that would raise the debt limit. The first one was the cut, cap, and balance plan that was first approved by the House before being sent to the Senate over 1 week ago.

This was a three-pronged approach that would have required a downpayment on our deficits by immediately cutting spending. It would have put us on a path to reform entitlements and cut spending over the medium term by putting a cap on spending as a percentage of our economy. Finally, it would have made sure we do not keep adding to our debt by approving a debt limit increase after a balanced budget amendment to our Constitution was passed by Congress.

This was the Republicans' first choice as to how to deal with this crisis. Unfortunately, Senate Democrats killed this commonsense bill which had the support, according to a CNN poll, of 66 percent of Americans. So we did not have an opportunity to debate it, offer amendments or get an up-and-down vote on that legislation. In the interest of solving the problem before us, it was recognized that probably we would have to find another approach.

There have been a lot of observations made by the media and others that somehow the Republicans need to compromise more in this situation. My

only question would be: Compromise with whom? With themselves? Because they are the only ones out there who have put forward a plan. And, in fact, this current proposal that will come from the House of Representatives actually is a compromise. The spending reductions in that proposal are two-thirds of those that were proposed in the House budget that was passed by the House of Representatives earlier this year. So it still addresses the fundamental problem, and Speaker BOEHNER came up with a new plan that would cut spending by \$915 billion and create a process to reduce the deficit by \$1.8 trillion on top of that.

This is not a perfect plan. As I said, it is certainly not our first choice, but it is a plan that cuts spending more than it increases the debt limit, and it does it without raising taxes on job creators. In a little while the Boehner plan will hopefully join the cut, cap, and balance plan as the only plan which has passed a body of Congress.

Senate Democrats do not have a plan to cut spending more than they raise the debt limit. Senate Democrats do not have a plan that can pass a single House of Congress. Of course, this is more than the White House can say, because the White House does not have a plan, period. So when the Boehner plan comes up for a vote here in the Senate, hopefully sometime later this evening, I would encourage my colleagues from across the aisle to support this measure.

They have been speaking constantly about the need to raise the debt limit, and here is their chance to do so. All they have to do is vote for this bill and send it to the President for his signature and we can put this issue to rest for the time being. Then it puts a pathway in place for us to get, as I said before, to a debate about entitlement reform several months down the road.

I understand there are some concerns among my colleagues on the other side about how long it will be before we would need to increase the debt limit again. But if you look at the past 20 years or so, 72 percent of the time our debt limit increases have been for less than a year. So this increase is hardly out of the normal time range. If you think about it, almost 75 percent of the time—almost three-fourths of the time—we have raised the debt limit, we have done it for less than a year.

What we are talking about here would be something that would take us into next year, at which point we would have to have another vote on the debt limit as we come to a conclusion about the entitlement reform component or element of this particular legislation.

So this increase, as I said, is not out of the normal time range. Markets are not going to care about how long we increase the debt limit. They simply care that we do not breach the debt limit and, more importantly, over the long term we lay out a long-term plan to cut the debt.

Many of us have spoken on the floor of the Senate in the past and indicated that the real crisis, the real issue before our country right now is not the debt limit, it is the debt. It is the fact that we are borrowing literally 40 cents out of every dollar that we spend here in Washington, DC, and we continue to pile up and accumulate massive amounts of debt that get passed on to future generations and put in great peril the economy of our country and our ability to create jobs. So a longer term increase is not needed to calm the markets.

But what this bill does not do is raise the debt limit past the elections. I think that is where the real rub comes in. Because the President has made it very clear, as have some of my colleagues, that this is one of their major concerns. They want to have a debt limit increase that gets us past the 2012 election. That is a political concern, it is not an economic concern.

But today it has arisen that these concerns are more than political, they are personal. You see, the White House is concerned that this would require Congress to approve another debt limit increase sometime in January, which they complain would ruin their Christmas vacation plans. I certainly do not want to ruin the President or anyone else's Christmas vacation plans, but I think it is a bit more important that we prevent our country from adding \$9.5 trillion to the debt held by the public, as the President's budget would do. I think it is a bit more important that we prevent our country from being forced to implement severe austerity programs, such as they have had to do in Europe because of their inability to constrain spending. I think it is a bit more important that we reform entitlements so these important programs are around for our children and grandchildren.

Finally, I think it is a bit more important that we leave our country in better shape for our children than the one we received. This has been the American ethic. Each generation has sacrificed so that the next generation could have a better quality of life. Today we risk turning that tradition on its head. If we continue to run up debts and deficits such as those proposed, our children and grandchildren will have an astounding burden to pay off to our country's creditors. We do not have to leave them this burden.

We have proposed, as I said, the cut, cap, and balance plan, which would make great strides in reducing this debt burden. We will have, hopefully later today—if not today perhaps sometime tomorrow—in front of us the Boehner plan, which will make significant downpayments on these burdens.

What I would simply say is that we have consistently now put before this Senate different plans we have had a chance to vote on. We voted on the cut, cap, and balance plan. Unfortunately, it was a tabling motion, it was a procedural motion. It was not an up-and-

down vote, because the leader did not want us to get on that legislation and have an opportunity to debate and amend it and ultimately vote on it. But we did have a vote on a tabling motion. Hopefully, we will get a vote on the Boehner plan which, as I said, hopefully will be in front of us in the not too distant future. But my point very simply is there has not been any effort put forward by our colleagues on the other side to, one, put forward a budget which we know now has been I think 820 days since the last time the Senate acted on a budget. You have to go back to April 29 of 2009. That was the last time the Senate voted on a budget.

It starts there. It starts there. That is where we set our priorities. That is where we determine how we are going to spend the people's tax dollars. So we have not had a budget. The House of Representatives passed a budget. They did it on schedule. They did it on time. As far as I know, there are no plans here to move a budget any time in the future.

Then we have the cut, cap, and balance plan that passed the House of Representatives, which was an attempt to deal with the debt limit increase, but do it in a way that forces us to focus on the real issue, which is spending reductions, spending reforms, puts in place a pathway to get a result on entitlement reform, forces a vote on a balanced budget amendment, which many of us think is a priority if we are going to get long-term spending under control, and then, hopefully later today, we are going to get a vote on the Boehner plan which will come over from the House of Representatives, which is yet another attempt to get the debt limit increased, but do it in a way that actually makes a dent in the long-term challenge facing this country, which again is not the debt limit, it is the debt.

That is the problem. That is fundamentally what we have to deal with. It is fundamentally a spending problem. Much has been made about a balanced approach. What does the other side mean when they say balanced? Usually it means we are going to take more of your money and spend it on more government. Many of us would support tax reform that would close tax loopholes, broaden the base, if you could lower the rates at the same time. I happen to believe that is important if we are going to get the economy growing again and creating jobs. I think you would see tremendous growth as a result of tax reform. But if you talk about raising taxes to pay for even more government, that is precisely the wrong approach. That is why we are in the mess we are in today, because we spend more than we take in. We have been doing it year over year. We have got to learn to live within our means and to quit spending money we do not have.

Many States have amendments in their constitutions that enable them

and force them and require them to do this every single year. It is time our Federal Government started operating in a way that makes fiscal sense. I think the American people understand very clearly what this is about. This is about spending. It is about getting Washington to live within its means, to quit borrowing 40 cents out of every dollar it spends, and to put this country on a path fiscally that will ensure we do not bankrupt the country for future generations, and that we get our economy back in a place where it can start growing and creating the jobs we need to get people in this country back to work.

I see the Senator from Utah. I expect he will have some remarks about this subject. There are many of us on this side, I know, who are anxious to vote and certainly are doing everything we can to facilitate this process where we deal with the crisis before us next week, but, importantly, do it in a way that addresses the fundamental issue here which is not the debt limit, it is the debt.

It is time Washington started living within its means, started to make sure we have got a pathway in place for not only cutting spending today but dealing with the long-term issue by putting a balanced budget amendment in our Constitution. I hope my colleagues will join us in this legislation that will come before us sometime we hope later today, and it will be yet another attempt to address this issue. I implore my colleagues here, I think we are going to get most of the Republicans to vote for this. I hope there will be some on the other side who will join us in this endeavor. It is too important to the future of this country not to.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado.) The Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. HATCH. I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to finish my remarks.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, before turning to the issue of the moment, I want to thank my dear friend for his good remarks here on the floor of the Senate. He is a great leader, a great human being, and he certainly outlined, I think in a fair way, some of the problems and some of the solutions we might have here on the floor.

But before turning to the issue of the moment, the need to restore the Nation's fiscal stability by reducing our deficits and debt, I want to return to a matter I discussed on the floor yesterday, and that is the FAA reauthorization bill.

I must respond to some of the comments made by two of my colleagues earlier today regarding one of the major sticking points in our efforts to pass the FAA reauthorization bill.

Their arguments are, to put it quite simply, fallacious and cannot go unanswered.

As you might expect, these comments were regarding the provision in the House bill affecting the way votes are counted in union elections in the airline industry. My colleagues, the senior Senator from West Virginia and the junior Senator from Iowa, characterize the House's actions as some sort of radical endeavor, a change that lacks justification and common sense.

In fact, the Senator from West Virginia even argued that the House's provisions would "undo 75 years of labor law."

These were his exact words. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the claim is so far from being accurate I simply have to assume that my good friend, Senator ROCKEFELLER, simply misspoke. I know this is the line the labor unions and the administration are peddling, but here is the truth: The House of Representatives or Senate Republicans are not trying to undo 75 years of labor law, it is the National Mediation Board—or NMB, I will call it—that has already done so in a highly partisan fashion.

It is the NMB, controlled by pro-union appointees of President Obama that in a partisan way unilaterally undid 75 years of labor law, and put their finger on the scale for the unions that bankroll Democratic political campaigns.

I know what I am talking about. I won the American Jurisprudence prize for labor law. I have led labor fights on the floor for our side for the last 35 years. House and Senate Republicans are only trying to restore long-lasting labor law following its highly partisan corruption by the National Mediation Board. This is not an opinion. This is fact.

Put the talking points and revisionist history aside, this is what you have: a highly partisan NMB changing 75 years of settled law, settled labor law, to benefit the Democrats' political allies. For 75 years, NMB-supervised elections required that a union receive the votes of a majority of the entire workforce before it can be certified. That has been the law. There is good reason for it. This was not just a mathematical trick to disadvantage unions, as my colleagues have argued. It is plain common sense.

Let's suppose, for example, that only 50 percent of a proposed bargaining unit votes in a union election, and the union wins by a very slim majority of the votes cast. In that case, a union representative would be certified with only the demonstrated support of one-fourth of the bargaining unit. That is what would happen if we follow the language the NMB fallaciously put into their ruling. One-quarter of a workforce could vote to certify a union and bind every other coworker to have to live with that decision. Apparently a commitment to Democratic and true majority rule only matters to the left

when it suits them. What is going on in this country is outrageous, not just at the National Mediation Board but the NLRB as well. Democratic radicals, very brilliant labor lawyers, who do not give a darn about what the law is, are now starting to change the laws by regulatory fiat.

Apparently a commitment to democratic and true majority rule only matters when it suits certain people's politics.

The Senator from Iowa compared these votes to Senate and schoolboard elections, suggesting that only a majority of those voting is necessary to prevail. This is a misguided comparison. First, union elections are not a choice among competing representatives. They are, instead, held to determine whether the workers want to be represented at all. Even setting that aside, how many schoolboards are going to be empowered to make decisions that affect every hour of every day an employee goes to work? How many Senators are elected to serve a small, narrowly defined group of constituents? And, in the end, if your vote is not counted in a Senate or schoolboard election, you will get another chance to vote a few years down the line.

Employees voting in these union elections have no such options. That is why the law has been completely different from what my two friends and colleagues have said on the floor. Requiring the support of the majority of the whole unit before certifying a union representative only makes common sense. This is why the procedure at NMB used for these elections went unchanged for 75 years. Boards appointed by Democratic Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Johnson, Carter, and Clinton all agreed with that process that the House bill is only attempting to restore.

In fact, the NMB appointed by President Carter unanimously ruled it did not have authority to administratively change the form of the NMB's ballot used in representation elections, and that such a change, if appropriate, can only be made by Congress. That makes sense.

Yet today we have an administration bent on greasing the rails in favor of the unions, and a Democratic Senate all too willing to go along with it. They are so willing that they have opted to stall passage of the FAA reauthorization to prevent Congress from restoring a system that served the Nation and airline industry well for decades. This is another example of the administration showing its true colors. Rather than provide certainty to travelers, the transportation industry, and airports, they are holding up a long-term FAA reauthorization in order to benefit their union allies. It is wrong. This type of thing should not go on. Nor should the National Mediation Board be issuing what ought to be congressional decisions.